

Do you know who's been looking through YOUR medicine cabinet?

Safely Storing and Disposing of Medications is Critical

Every day, 2,500 young people use a prescription drug to get high for the first time. Nearly half report getting these medications from either a friend or a relative. Why prescription drugs?

According to those surveyed, teens perceive prescription drugs as safer than and as less harmful than street drugs. Additionally, they cite taking the medications to help them relax, cope with stress, depression or anxiety. Prescription drugs prescribed for pain, anxiety or sleep that are among those most highly abused. But, even over-the-counter medications are not safe from the experimental hands of teens. Over-the-counter cough and cold medicines have a long history of being misused and abused by this age group. Additionally, once teens experience the initial euphoria many of these medicines induce, they can easily progress on the addictive slope to using more dangerous drugs such as heroin. As a result, it's important to talk to your teen about the dangers of prescription drug abuse (as well as drug abuse) and to take measures to ensure that dangerous substances aren't accessible in your, your family or your friends' homes.

Prevent access and abuse by using the following tips:

1. Don't keep prescription medication in a medicine cabinet, kitchen cupboard or drawer.
2. Don't leave medications out in the open where pets or children could accidentally ingest them.
3. Keep all medicine safely secured in a secured lock box, which are available online and at some pharmacies and department stores.
4. Make it a point to routinely take inventory of your prescribed and over-the-counter medications.

Discard of no longer needed or expired ones at one of the drug drop boxes

(<http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/health/healthservices/substanceabuse/drugdropbox.html>)

located outside of each of Baltimore County's 10 police precincts. Boxes are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, year-round. If you're not able to access a drug drop box, use the following measures to safely dispose of your no longer needed medication:

1. Take the medication out of the original container.
2. Remove or obscure all identifying personal information (such as the prescription label) from the container.
3. Empty the medication into a sealable, plastic bag. Ensure that pills, capsules and liquids are crushed, dissolved or diluted by adding water.
4. Add coffee grounds, cat litter, sawdust or another material to the bag to help make it less appealing for a pet or child to ingest it.
5. After carefully sealing the bag, place in your household trash for disposal.

If you or a loved one is suffering from an alcohol, tobacco or drug (illegal or prescription) addiction, help is available. Call the Department of Health, Bureau of Behavioral Health at 410-887-3828.

This message has been brought to you by the Baltimore County Department of Health